

Riders' Advisory Council

October 7, 2009

I. Call to Order:

Ms. Zinkl called the October meeting of the Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:39 p.m.

The following members of the Council were present:

Diana Zinkl, Chair, District of Columbia

David Alpert, District of Columbia

Kelsi Bracmort, District of Columbia*

Sharon Conn, Prince George's County

Frank DeBernardo, Prince George's County

Kenneth DeGraff, District of Columbia

Penny Everline, Arlington County

Chris Farrell, Montgomery County

Dharm Guruswamy, At-Large

Carl Seip, At-Large

Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair

Evelyn Tomaszewski, Fairfax County

Carol Carter Walker, District of Columbia

Lillian White, City of Alexandria

Ron Whiting, Montgomery County

Victoria Wilder, Montgomery County

The following members of the Council were not present and had provided prior notice of their absence from the meeting:

Patricia Daniels, District of Columbia

Susan Holland, Prince George's County

Ms. Zinkl noted that the Council's meetings were governed by Robert's Rules of Order and that speakers would only have the floor if they were recognized by the Chair or if they were listed on the agenda. She also noted that the Council's monthly meetings are primarily run to provide information for the benefit of the public.

II. Public Comment Period:

Ms. Zinkl asked if there were any members of the public who wished to make comments. There were no comments from members of the public.

III. Roundtable Introductions, New Member Welcome:

Noting that two new members from Montgomery County had joined the Council, Ms. Zinkl asked the members introduce themselves and provide information about their use of the Metro system.

IV. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes:

Ms. Zinkl asked for approval of the meeting minutes for the August and September 2009 Council meetings.

Mr. Seip moved approval of the August 2009 meeting minutes, as presented. This motion was seconded by Dr. Conn.

In favor: Ms. Zinkl, Mr. Alpert, Dr. Conn, Mr. DeBernardo, Mr. DeGraff, Ms. Everline, Mr. Farrell, Mr. Seip, Ms. Sheehan, Ms. Walker

Opposed: none

Abstentions: Mr. Guruswamy, Ms. Tomaszewski, Ms. White, Mr. Whiting, Ms. Wilder
This motion passed (10-0-5)

Mr. Seip moved approval of the September 2009 meeting minutes as presented. This motion was seconded by Ms. Tomaszewski. Without objection, the September 2009 Riders' Advisory Council meeting minutes were approved as presented.

Dr. Bracmort arrived at the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

V. Member Reports:

A. *Report by Chair:*

Ms. Zinkl noted that the Council will be holding a special meeting concerning the NH-1 bus route on Tuesday, October 20th. She said that this meeting is being held to respond to concerns that riders brought up at the Council's September meeting and that additional information will follow.

Ms. Zinkl also noted that Metro had responded to the Council's letter concerning service disruptions and notification to riders and that a copy of that response was had been emailed to members of the R.A.C. She said that members could discuss next steps on the issue later in the meeting.

She also told members of the R.A.C. that the letter to the Administrator of the General Services Administration was mailed out as approved at the September Council meeting, though the R.A.C. has not yet received a response. She noted that she had not received any information about the appointment of federal representatives to the Metro Board of Directors. Ms. Zinkl added that the Metro Board Room was remodeled during the August recess to accommodate these new members when they are appointed and that this remodeling also included upgrades to the room's sound system.

Ms. Zinkl said that Metro had a couple bus-pedestrian accidents over the past month – one earlier in September which resulted in severe injuries to the pedestrian struck and one accident which occurred on Monday and which killed the pedestrian involved. She said that she would be sending a card to the woman's family on the R.A.C.'s behalf.

Lastly, Ms. Zinkl noted that members each have a packet of items in front of them with information that is not planned for formal discussion at that evening's meeting, including:

- Information on most common customer complaints broken out by mode;
- A draft version of a public service announcement to let riders know about the R.A.C. that would be placed throughout the Metro system – she asked members for their feedback on the announcement by next Wednesday;
- An invitation to the Accessibility Advisory Committee's Heddinger award ceremony on October 22nd; and
- A copy of the draft bylaws amendments.

After discussion it was decided that members who had any comments on the bylaws amendments should send their comments to Mr. Pasek, the Council's staff coordinator.

Ms. Zinkl added that the Council is still working on getting information on the SmarTrip program and Metro's Capital Needs Inventory which was discussed at the Council's September meeting.

B. Report by Accessibility Advisory Committee:

Mr. Sheehan announced that the award ceremony for the Richard Heddinger Award will be held from 5 to 6 p.m. on October 22nd. He noted that this year, the award will be given posthumously to Larry Pelkey, who was a member of the A.A.C.

He also noted that Metro General Manager John Catoe was at the A.A.C.'s last meeting and discussed with the Committee the issues that he'd like to see it address in the coming year. He noted that the A.A.C. would likely have several meetings on the budget, especially because of continued significant growth in MetroAccess service. He said that he would share information from the A.A.C.'s discussions with the R.A.C. Mr. Sheehan explained that the Committee was asked to look at MetroAccess and come up with projections and recommendations by December. He added that the A.A.C. may have some all-day meetings and work sessions on this and other topics over the coming months. Mr. Sheehan asked that R.A.C. members receive a copy of the PowerPoint from its most recent meeting that discussed MetroAccess service in the context of Metro's budget.

Mr. Sheehan said that Metro is creating an Office of Eligibility that will address customers' eligibility for MetroAccess services. He said that the office should receive a new director in mid-October and would be looking at issues related to eligibility for MetroAccess services.

Ms. Zinkl noted that Metro is starting its budget process a little earlier this year and will be holding town hall meetings in mid-October in the District of Columbia and Virginia and in November in Maryland. She asked that Mr. Pasek send out the presentation that was given to the Board's Finance Committee at its September 10 meeting that outlines some of the issues that Metro would face with in developing its FY2011 budget.

Mr. Alpert asked whether R.A.C. members should meet prior to the town hall meetings to discuss budget issues.

Dr. Conn noted that Metro has proposed increases for bus and rail fares and asked whether fare increases had ever been proposed for MetroAccess service. Mr. Sheehan responded that increasing MetroAccess fares or limiting the MetroAccess service area to the $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile standard set forth by the federal government is part of the discussion. He also noted that he had received a call from a staff aide to Board Chairman Jim Graham inviting him to participate in a panel that would address Metro's budget and accessibility issues.

VI. Staff Reports:

A. Metro Bus Stop Guidelines

Ms. Zinkl introduced Ramona Burns and Girum Meseret, both from Metro's Office of Long Range Planning, who presented information on Metro's proposed guidelines for

bus stop amenities and spacing along with Metro's plans to improve customer information at bus stops. Following Ms. Burns' and Mr. Meseret's presentations, there was a question-and-answer period.

Ms. Zinkl asked if there was a report available from the Metro Bus Stop Guidelines study that could be circulated to members of the Council. Ms. Burns responded that the report is still in draft form and could be circulated to members of the Council once it was finalized. Ms. Zinkl said that if an exposure draft were available, several members of the Council would likely be interested in seeing a copy of it.

Ms. Zinkl also asked about the funding for bus stop improvements as outlined in Ms. Burns' study. Ms. Burns said that since jurisdictions are responsible for the construction and maintenance of bus stops and bus stop facilities, they would be responsible for this funding. Regarding the funding responsibility for new signs and customer information at bus stops, Mr. Meseret said that these would be funded by Metro.

Mr. Sheehan asked that these presentations be made available to Metro's Office of ADA Programs (ADAP) so that they would be aware of the proposed recommendations. He also asked whether proposed signage would meet ADA guidelines. Mr. Hamre said that, under the proposed guidelines, Metro would not have individual bus stop numbers in raised print, but would rather have a raised-print sign on the bus stop pole indicating that it was a bus stop. He added that the individual bus stop number would meet or exceed the ADA guidelines for type size. Mr. Hamre also noted that the recommendations are ADA compliant.

Mr. Sheehan asked whether information from the bus stop inventory has been shared with the jurisdictions. He noted that many bus stops are unusable because of access issues. Mr. Hamre responded that the studies presented at that evening's meeting are only related to the actual bus stops, not access to the stops. He said that Metro has created an office of customer facilities that is charged with working with the jurisdictions to address bus stop access issues. He noted that Metro has over 12,000 bus stops spread across nine jurisdictions, so addressing the issue of bus stop access will be an incremental process over time.

Mr. Alpert asked whether schedule information would be provided for routes with very frequent service. Mr. Hamre responded that because Metro will not be posting the schedules for the entire routes – rather, just the times that buses are supposed to arrive at that particular stop, it will have the necessary space on the information panels to list each trip individually.

Mr. Alpert also asked about the design of bus system maps proposed for bus shelters. Ms. Burns responded that these maps would show bus routes in a given area. Mr. Hamre added that at bus stops with shelters, there would be a map in the shelter showing all routes and highlighting the routes that serve that particular stop. He said that the information panel on the bus stop pole would also have some type of map of the individual routes.

Ms. White said that she was glad that larger type would be used to display bus schedules at bus stops. She added that the bus terminal in Shirlington is a good example of a high-quality bus facility. Ms. White also suggested providing vegetation at bus stops to provide shade for waiting riders. Mr. Burns said that one of the considerations when siting bus stops is to take advantage of amenities already located around the stop. Mr. Hamre responded that Metro tries to avoid vegetation such as trees around its bus stops because tree roots can cause tripping hazards with sidewalks and pavement. Ms. Zinkl noted that these are Metro guidelines and individual jurisdictions have flexibility within these guidelines in terms of bus stop design.

Mr. Whiting asked how members of the Council could give input to their respective jurisdictions about bus stop design. Ms. Burns responded that Metro has been working closely with the jurisdictional staff as part of this study to ensure that they were comfortable with its recommendations.

Ms. Walker asked if Metro used focus groups to help it resolve issues with sign placement. Ms. Burns responded that Metro held a public meeting as part of the study to solicit feedback. She also noted that the standards for sign placement are laid out in the Americans with Disabilities Act and that Metro followed those guidelines.

Mr. Farrell asked about Metro's plans to enhance stops at Metrorail stations in the context of Metr requiring riders to exit through the rear door of the bus to speed loading and unloading. Mr. Hamre said that Metro station stops would qualify as "transit centers" under the guidelines. He also noted that requiring customers to exit through the rear doors is an operating practice that isn't covered under these guidelines but is something that is being raised as part of a review of Metro's operating practices.

Mr. Guruswamy asked about how other (non-Metro) operators would display their schedule information. Mr. Hamre responded that there are several options for displaying information and that Metro should be able to accommodate information

requirements at almost all of its stops using the display options outlined. Mr. Meseret added that because Metro will only show times for that particular stop, instead of the whole schedule, the information will take up less space.

Mr. Guruswamy also noted that Metro's current bus stop maps provide less information about jurisdictionally-operated services than about Metrobus and said that he hoped this would change when new maps were installed. He also suggested that Metro go beyond ADA requirements and include the individual bus stop identification number in Braille on bus stop signposts to help visually-impaired customers. Ms. Everline added that Mr. Guruswamy's suggestion would fit with universal design principles that call for organizations to use any opportunities available to incorporate accessibility.

Ms. Wilder said that Metro needs to look at ensuring easier access to paper "take-one" bus schedules at bus stops. She also asked how often schedule and route information at Metrobus stops was updated. Mr. Meseret responded that this information is updated every time that Metro changes the schedule for a route (or routes) serving that particular stop. He explained that Metro generally changes schedules twice per year and that information is changed at every bus stop where service is changed. Mr. Hamre added that the study has worked with bus stop maintenance staff in the design of the stop to make it easier than it is currently to change out the information at the actual bus stop rather than having to make changes in the shop to make the update process more efficient.

Mr. DeBernardo discussed the linkage between seating at bus stops and shelters. He added that Metro also needs to look at bus drivers as a source of passenger information and perhaps provide additional training so that they can better assist customers. Ms. Burns noted that Metro has done just that as part of its Priority Corridor Network studies and explained that for the 30s Line, for example, drivers were given training and information about landmarks and connecting routes specific to that route so that they could better assist customers.

Mr. Seip noted that new bus shelters were recently installed in several locations in the District, some very close to each other. He asked whether bus stop spacing would be addressed before these shelters were installed. Ms. Burns noted that these shelters were installed by the jurisdictions as part of advertising contracts and that the installation was not done by Metro.

Mr. Seip said that he liked the different colors on the new bus stop sign to differentiate local and express routes and suggested that Metro more clearly label the

unique bus stop number for NextBus information on the bus stop sign, highlighting the NextBus brand. Mr. Hamre responded that there are different options for providing information about NextBus and said that he would be interested to hear feedback on what members would find most effective. Mr. Seip said that specifically noting that riders could use the stop ID to get real-time bus information would be helpful.

Mr. Seip also asked for a timeline for when the new bus stop signage and information would be installed. Mr. Meseret said that it would take some time to change out all of Metro's 12,000+ bus stops but that the process is planned to begin in 2010. Mr. Seip suggested providing more detailed information, such as nearby places of interest, on the maps at bus stops, as riders are often travelling to locations not immediately on the bus route.

Dr. Bracmort suggested that Metro approach tourist operators to see if they would want to collocate their stops with Metrobus stops. She suggested that this could provide additional revenue for Metro along with reducing streetscape clutter.

Dr. Conn said that Metro may want to look at the style of seating installed in bus stop shelters to discourage homeless individuals from camping out in bus shelters. She also suggested providing areas for buses to pull out of traffic when loading and unloading.

Ms. Tomaszewski said that she found the schedule information confusing, especially since the times appeared to match up with the timepoints shown on the "strip map," even though they didn't correspond to one another. There was further discussion about how to best display arrival information on bus stop information displays.

Ms. Zinkl said that if members have additional feedback that they could send them to Mr. Pasek to send along to Metro staff. Ms. Burns told members that the study has a website: www.metrobusstopguidelines.com where they could find additional information.

B. Metro Transit Police – Crime Statistics and Significant Facts:

Deputy Chief Jeri Lee from the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) provided the Council with an overview of MTPD's responsibilities and programs.

Deputy Chief Lee explained that the MTPD was formed by an act of Congress in 1976 and started out with approximately 30 people. He said that the MTPD is now about 450 officers strong, which is larger than the police forces in the City of

Alexandria or Arlington County. He added that Metro also has a security force of approximately 130 officers that handle security for Metro railyards, bus divisions and other Metro facilities. He noted that MTPD has a full-fledged FBI certified bomb team, a Special Response Team along with its regular and plainclothes officers. He said that MTPD is also represented on the National Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Deputy Chief Lee then provided an overview of recent MTPD activities including:

- The arrest of an individual for making multiple bomb threats against the Metro system;
- Increased recruitment and training of Metro Special Police Officers who protect Metro facilities in response to a recommendation from the Federal Transit Administration;
- The establishment of a tip line for riders to report juvenile misbehavior on Metro. He said that Metro is working to try and address unruly behavior, especially during afterschool hours.
- The establishment of Metro's Office of Emergency Management, which handles Metro's response to accidents and other emergency situations.
- Responses to an increase in robberies throughout the system, including the establishment of a Robbery Suppression Team to target robberies of items such as cell phones and iPods.
- Programs to target and address assaults on bus operators.

Deputy Chief Lee also provided statistics on the number of calls for service received by the MTPD, the number of arrests made, and the number of citations written by the Transit Police. He also reviewed statistics on the incidences of specific crimes on the Metro system and the top ten stations in each jurisdictions in terms of Part I crimes.

In response to a question from Dr. Conn about the ownership of the parking garage at the New Carrollton station, Deputy Chief Lee notes that the garage was owned by Prince George's County but that Metro Transit Police and local police forces have concurrent jurisdiction at that garage and at other Metro station parking facilities.

In response to a question from Mr. Seip, Deputy Chief Lee said that MTPD has jurisdiction on all Metro property and within 150 feet of any Metrobus stop.

Ms. Zinkl asked whether the crime statistics shown also capture crimes reported to jurisdictional police that occurred on Metro property. Deputy Chief Lee said that those crimes were not reflected in the statistics presented. He noted that it would still be tracked, since it was reported to the local jurisdiction and that in most cases, the

local jurisdiction would refer the call to Metro Transit Police to handle, in which case it would be reflected in the statistics presented.

Ms. Zinkl also asked how Metro used the crime statistics it collected to deploy officers throughout the system. Deputy Chief Lee explained that MTPD has reorganized its operations since Chief Taborn took charge a year-and-a-half ago. He said that Metro tries to look at upcoming events, such as holidays or the opening of school, to plan for its deployments.

Ms. Zinkl also asked how many officers were deployed to patrol buses at any one time. Deputy Chief Lee responded that he was hesitant to share specific information on deployments publicly.

In response to questions from Ms. Wilder, Deputy Chief Lee clarified the crime statistics for the Gallery Place station and provided definitions for the term “SRT” (Special Response Team). Ms. Wilder also asked about Metro’s K-9 response units. Deputy Chief Lee said that Metro has about 18-20 dog teams and they are mostly trained in bomb detection, though some also work in narcotics detection. He said that Metro tries to keep at least a couple of dog teams on duty at all times to be able to respond to incidents.

Mr. Seip asked about MTPD’s policies on ticketing riders for minor infractions such as eating or drinking within the system or playing loud music – he noted that he hadn’t seen anyone ticketed for such an offense. Deputy Chief Lee noted that Metro has had several different philosophies on enforcing these rules. He explained that it is legal to carry food on the Metro, though not consume it. He said that officers try to remind riders of the rules to achieve compliance with them and that officers try to remain professional and exercise discretion in their dealings with the riding public.

Ms. Walker asked how members of the public should report police misbehavior. Deputy Chief Lee suggested that they call the office of the Chief of the Transit Police and that his office would investigate any complaints. She also asked if MTPD officers had any jurisdiction over bus drivers’ behavior, such as not following traffic regulations or not wearing seatbelts. Deputy Chief Lee responded that the MTPD is a full-fledged police department and, as such, would have jurisdiction to enforce those kinds of rules, though he noted that their enforcement has not been a department priority in the past. He said that he would raise the issue with the department.

Ms. Walker added that she was upset by the press release that announced Metro’s efforts to combat juvenile crime and misbehavior on the Metro because efforts

appeared to be targeted to D.C. students. She said that he has noticed that incidents of misbehavior are not limited to students from the District. Deputy Chief Lee said that MTPD targets areas where they know that there are problems – specifically at Tenleytown, Anacostia, Minnesota Avenue and Gallery Place.

Ms. Walker said that she would be interested in getting information on how much crime in the Metro system is committed by juveniles since they are the focus of so much of MTPD's efforts. Deputy Chief Lee said that many of the actions committed by juveniles are not necessarily arrestable offenses, but they nonetheless are quality of life issues that affect other riders using the Metro system. Ms. Walker also asked what kind of coordination exists between the MTPD and D.C. Public Schools (DCPS).

Ms. Zinkl said that she has learned that the D.C. relies heavily on Metro for student transportation both for transportation to and from school but also for activities such as field trips that are supervised by teachers and other staff. She said that this helps students learn how to use transit and how to behave when using transit.

Deputy Chief Lee said that he has daily conference calls with DCPS and the D.C. Department of Social Services to anticipate and address issues. He added that approximately 90% of his resources during after-school hours are used to address juvenile misbehavior. Ms. Walker said that she would like to see the statistics on crimes in the system committed by juveniles.

Ms. White asked whether the MTPD had any issues in dealing with drunk college students riding the trains. Deputy Chief Lee said that he wasn't aware of any specific issues related to intoxicated individuals riding the Metro.

Mr. Farrell asked the Deputy Chief about a sign that was recently posted at the Wheaton garage that discouraged loitering and noted that people hanging out in the garage that didn't have vehicles parked there would be arrested and whether it was posted in other locations as well. Dep. Chief Lee said he would have to look into the matter further.

Ms. Zinkl asked about assaults on bus operators and how they related to the number of overall assaults in the system. Deputy Chief responded that the bus operator assaults listed were not necessarily included in the “aggravated assaults” documents, as many of the bus operator assaults do not rise to the level of aggravated assault.

Ms. Zinkl said that she has noticed that there are several types of behaviors, ranging from horseplay to swearing to violent crime and that the concern may be that Metro is lumping all of these behaviors together. Deputy Chief Lee responded that Metro deals with an influx of approximately 10,000 juveniles every afternoon and MTPD officers try to make their presence known to discourage inappropriate behavior. He also said that officers cannot necessarily distinguish between horseplay and more serious behavior when it is occurring and that officers need to respond to all unruly behavior. He noted that MTPD officers have taken several guns from juveniles which underscores the potential for incidents to escalate.

Dr. Bracmort noted that she has changed her route home from work to avoid unruly juveniles. She also asked if Metro tracked assaults on train operators in the same manner as it did bus operator assaults. Deputy Chief Lee said that Metro has had very few, if any assaults on train operators.

Dr. Bracmort also asked about the MTPD's response time and noted that she was recently on a train where personnel were calling for Transit Police but that they didn't arrive before the train had to leave. Deputy Chief Lee responded that MTPD's average response time is 11-13 minutes, largely because officers on foot patrol have to rely on getting to incidents via train and bus. He noted that in an emergency situation, all responding police departments are called in, which cuts down on response time.

Mr. Guruswamy asked whether of Metro's K-9 units are vapor dogs that can smell fumes coming off of a bomb or other device without having to actually inspect each bag. Deputy Chief Lee said that he wasn't sure if Metro's dogs had this capability, though he said that they were accredited at the highest level by the FBI.

Mr. DeBernardo asked who a rider should call if he or she was on a bus and noticed a crime being committed or about to be committed. Deputy Chief Lee said that a rider could call Metro Transit Police at (202) 962-2121 or they also had the option of calling 911.

Dr. Conn asked about the status of random bag checks on Metro. She also noted that she has not seen the MTPD's (202) 962-2121 number on any of the buses and suggested that it be displayed more prominently. Dr. Conn said that bus drivers do not do anything to control or address rider behavior and also noted that sometimes even students who are escorted by teachers or other adults do not always behave well. She suggested that students have something identifying which school they attend so that

other riders can follow up with school administration if they notice poor or inappropriate behavior.

Deputy Chief Lee said that he can't necessarily address bus drivers' actions to address behavior but he said that drivers have very strict rules not to escalate situations as they occur and they may therefore be hesitant to intervene. Dr. Conn said that she understands that Metrobus operators have procedures that they need to follow and suggested that Metro post the number for the MTPD so that riders could call to report incidents. She also discussed behavior issues with large groups of escorted students.

Ms. Everline noted that buses do have signs that display the message "EMERGENCY CALL 911" on the outside of the bus, which the bus driver can activate discreetly, and in those cases, it may not seem like the bus operator is taking any action. Deputy Chief Lee noted that there is a protocol when operators notify Metro of an emergency, though many times suspects are able to simply leave the bus before police can arrive.

Ms. Zinkl thanked the Deputy Chief for attending the meeting and said that she looked forward to continuing the dialogue between the Council and the Transit Police.

C. Metro FY2011 Budget Development:

There was additional discussion among Council members regarding the development of Metro's FY2011 budget. The discussion focused on opportunities for the Council to offer suggestions to Metro and how these suggestions would be coordinated with Metro's overall budget development process.

After further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.